The Theatres by Emory Calvert

From left to right: Miss Olive May in "Shadowed," at the Fulton theater; Miss Grace George in 'A Half Hour," at the Playhouse, and Julia Marlowe, in Shaksperean repertoire at the Manhattan opera house.

Below, Miss Gail Kain, in "Seven Keys to Baldpate," at the Astor theater.

Optical Delusions of Picture Plays Baffle Efforts of a Living Cast

ONE of the fallacies concerning moving picture plays is an assumption that they must necessarily, fall short of dramatic representations presented by living casts, in many different ways. The spoken words are missing—though phonographic words have already been synchronized with the films—but this lack is toned down by the occasional presentation of explanatory paragraphs on the screen, so that the pictures following are deprived of all possible chance of misunderstanding. Among film producers, the best play is considered to be that which requires the fewest of these explanations on the screen—in other words, that in which the action and connecting interest are so clearly defined that no explanation is necessary.

To one who has read Alphonze Daudet's novel, Sapho, for instance, it seems an impossible task to so present the story by soundless motion-pictures as to keep its thread unfailingly before the spectator and lose nothing of its dramatic force. Yet, seeing the dramatization from it on the screen, the whole story is actually there—with gains rather than losses in the story interest. And with this, as with many other stories, the film method of dramatization permits of optical delusions which no stage manager would ever dare attempt with a living cast—or if he did so, would be unable to present without makeshift mechanical devices which are glaringly evident to those in the audience.

These optical delusions are many and varied—applicable to every condition of life and to every motion made by a living creature. For example—one of the scenes from Sapho represents four celebrated men sitting around one of the familiar tables in a Parisian cafe, describing their personal experiences. On the regular stage, this would be told in dialog, appealing to the hearers' ears alone—or, if anything further were attempted, there might be a tableaux behind a gauze set at the back of the stage, with the four men quite in evidence all the time. But in the film representation, the men at the table, in their evening clothes—the interior of the cafe—the waiters and other guests—dissolve imperceptibly into a soft grey mist from which another picture grows even before they have entirely disappeared—the actual scene with Sapho which the narrator is at that moment describing. One instant, you see his lips move—see the animated expressions upon his and his listeners' faces—and then you see the living, moving facts which he describes.

This is but one instance of the apparent impossibilities which the film accomplishes and the living dramatization does not. Another is the sort of thing which is done in a new Keystone comedy, called "When Dreams Come True." It represents the "morning after" when a husband who has spent a convivial night is sleeping off the effects in bed while his devoted wife ministers to him. Presently, someone comes in and leaves a large basket upon the bureau—going quickly out and closing the door. As you wonder what is to happen next, the lid of the basket comes off—and about 30 live rattlesnakes slide out of it to the floor. They squirm into every corner of the room. One hangs from the chandelier and tickles the dozing man with its rattles. Another coils up between his knees, gently swaying its head back and forth as the man wakes up and looks at it in horror. During the next 10 minutes, about every person who enters the room goes out of it shrieking, writhing, with one or more living snakes coiled about him.

In no other method of dramatic representation would it be possible to show actual living snakes in any such way as this. There is no doubt whatever in the spectator's mind as to the snakes being real, or as to their being the deadly poisonous, diamond-backed variety of rattlesnake. There is no question whatever that any person finding himself in the same room with such a lot of squirmers—or feeling their slimy coils about his neck—would do exactly as the people do in this comedy.

These are among the thousands of marvels which have given motion pictures the hold they have today upon the public.

EVIDENCE IS CONCLUDED IN TRIAL OF LONG BEACH BANKER

Los Angeles, Calif., Sept. 27.—The case for and against George H. Bixby, the Long Beach millionaire banker and rancher, who has been on trial before judge Bledsoe in the superior court charged with contributing to the delinquency of Cleo Helen Barker, a minor, was completed today. Irene Marie Brown Levy, a former inmate of the Jonquila, was the last witness.

Monday will be filled out with arguments and instructions and the case will be given to the jury.

Bixby seemed well satisfied when the court adjourned. He tilted his hat on the back of his head and said, "Well that part of it is over."

New York Theater Patrons Prefer Comedies to Underworld Dramas

NEW YORK, Sept. 27.—It has been definitely decided that the underworld drama is not going to be the keystone to the arch of the present New York dramatic season, as was threatened to be the case a few weeks ago. The cold reception given Paul Armstrong's latest play clearly indicates that the play going public of this city has been fed to repletion on the nauseating stuff put out with the hypocritical pretense that it makes for moral uplift.

There is not the slightest evidence to show that a socalled "white slave" drama adds one whit to the security of an unprotected girl in New York or anywhere else. There is nothing to show that the sympathy for an unfortunate character on the stage, which is aroused on the theater, ever extends itself into actual life. In fact, it is quite the contrary. If half the tears that have been shed over the misfortunes of the heroine of the old time melodrama had been translated into concrete sympathy for the unfortunates in real life we would not today have a "white slave" problem; all evil would have been banished from the world and we would now be living in a state of roseate loveliness. No, the stage does not reform. The field of the serious drama is soley that of art and in that sense only can it advance or retrograde. Perhaps the public would have gone on accepting and commending the tenderloin dramas and melodramas if they had possessed real art, or even the grace of sincerity, for life in any of its manifold estates is legitimate material for the playwright—the artist; but a tenderloin play executed by a crude hand, is not what the American stage needs.

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It is a pleasure to record another big success for that industrious young genius, George M. Cohan. In his "Seven Keys to Baldpate," which he made over from the novel of Earl-Derr Bigger, he has revealed an increasing skill as a playwright. This farce opened at the Astor theater Monday night and it was immediately stamped with universal approval. Even those who had read the book found themselves keenly interested in the outcome of the thing, because of the ingenious way in which the clever author welded and dovetailed the unique situations of the book.

The story of the play is something like this: William Hallowell Magee, who writes summer novels to go with hammocks and bonbons, comes to Baldpate Inn, a summer hotel. It is in the dead of winter and he is there to win a bet made with the hotel owner that he can turn out a 10,000 word story in 24 hours. He is in possession of what he thinks is the only key to the hotel. He no more than gets launched on his frenzied literary stunts when real and thrilling melodrama descends on him. It develops that there are six other keys to Baldpate, which admit into the novelist's presence, one after another, a crook, an adventuress, a grafting mayor, a ghostly hermit, a corrupt corporation president and his aid, and also, to the sentimental disturbance of the author, a beautiful "star" reporteress, whose first glance penetrates his heart.

Amid the howling of the storm outside a series of howling melodramatic scenes are enacted within. Plots, intrigues, and even supposed murdr, pile thickly one upon the other, and the spectacle of the haried anthor in the midst of these wild scenes, makes the blood race through the veins of the spectators.

There are $200,000 involved in the plot. First one character has it, then another, and finally the author, to protect his life, shoots the adventuress. Just as everyone is wondering how the thing is going to end, the keeper of the inn enters and explains that it was all a put up job to keep the author from winning his bet. The reporteress agrees to give up newspaper work and concentrate her interests for all time to the promoting of the author's happiness. And then all the characters disappear from the scene save the author, who, with his manuscript in his hand, rises triumphantly and announces that he has not only won his bet but that his new book will go into the millionth edition. The whole play, you see, as the story he wrote to win the bet.

Wallace Eddinger, as the author, was splendid. He imparted exactly the right touch to the role. Gail Kain, as the adventuress, was a charm and a delight, and Joseph Allen, as Peter the Hermit, was a well of laughter. All the other members of the cast were very good indeed. There is no risk in predicting a long New York run for Mr. Cohan's latest farce.

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The most joyous thing about "The Marriage Market," a new musical comedy, which opened at the Knickerbocker theater Monday night, is the fond hope it has aroused that it might act as the opening wedge to ory us free from the rag-time incubus.

This piece showed that a musical comedy can be both musical and highly entertaining without a suggestion of rag time in it, by the simple process of substituting real music, of so captivating a quality, that it will drive rag time off the streets and out of the cabarets.

The music of "The Marriage Market" was written by Victor Jacobi; the book, a good one, by M. Brac'y and F. Martos; the lyrics by Arthur Anderson and Adrian Ross, and all adapted for the English stage by Gladys Unger.

The scene of the piece, which is in three acts, is laid in southern California, and the story revolves around the old Spanish custom of holding an annual marriage market which has been kept alive by the proprietor of the Palace hotel. On this occasion the proprietor, who is also the sheriff of the county, substitutes a real marriage for the mock ones of earlier seasons. It thus develops that Mariposa Gilroy, the daughter of a multi-millionaire senator, finds herself married to Tulare Teddy; and that her friend, Kitty Kent, is the wife of a "silly ass" Englishman, lord Hurlingham, whose "man" Blinker is in love with Mariposa's maid Emma. Of course the usual complications follow, but in the end the two couples find that they love each other, the valet marries the maid and all ends happily.

Of course, the feature of the performance was the dancing of the wonderfully graceful Donald Brian, who looks more youthful than ever.

The singing honors are shared between Venita Fitzhugh (Mariposa), Carroll McComas (Kitty Kent) and Moya Mannering (Emma).

The music ran to the waltz style, as did also the dancing but it was all captivating. Among the men, praise is due Percival Knight, as "lord Hurlingham," and Arthur Reynolds, as his valet.

This musical comedy afforded a thoroughly enjoyable evening and in it Mr. Frohman has found a worthy successor to "The Sunshine Girl."

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Monday night marked the opening of the Sothern-Marlowe season of five weeks at the Manhattan opera house. The play presented was "Much Ado About Nothing." That these two excellent artists still hold a vital grip on their admirers was manifest by the crowded house.

As "Benedick," Mr. Sothern was as whimsical and fiery as may be. His acting had the refreshing finish of the genuine artist—his touch was sure and perfectly satisfying.

As to Miss Marlowe's "Beatrice," no new praise need be bestowed. She is charming in all her situations, and her rich, pure voice, capable of meeting the demands of any literature, is a delight to the ear.

The supporting company is one of the most competent ever seen here. Especial mention should be made of Mr. Frederick Lewis, Sidney Mather, J. Sayre Crawley and Lark Taylor. The "Dogberry" of George Wilson was delicious in its unctuous stupidity.

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The most satisfactory thing, perhaps the only pleasing thing, about "The Escape," the latest Paul Armstrong play, at the Lyric theater, was the one the audience made after the three morbid acts of east side tenement misery.

This play is merely a thesis by Mr. Armstrong on eugenics and the problem of the tenements. It should have been submitted to the department of sociology at Harvard or some other institution engaged in dissecting the various phases of sordid life.

Here we have a daughter of "the tenements," who decides to "escape" from her "boozy" father, her tatterdemalion mother, her consumptive sister and an unfortunate brother who has been hit over the head with a stove lid and thus devloped a murder mania.

We next find her in the office of a United States senator, acting as his stenographer. They go out together for dinner and the next time we see her she is in a luxuriant apartment kept by the senator. She tires of having her soul "degraded" and goes in for nursing, and is finally led to the marriage alter by a most verbose doctor, who had originally suggested stenography as the way of escape. In the meantime the consumptive sister dies and her brother kills her besotted husband. Then they take the brother out to trepan his skull and let the murder mania "escape." We didn't see the operation, but, as one of the critics expressed it, "we hoped for the worst."

It was about as sorry a lot of dejected derelicts as was ever brought together on the stage. And the play contained nothing new. Even the statistics had been used before. It was an ugly story, crudely told in an unending stream of uninspired words.

At the declamatory heroine, Katherine Calvert did her best, but she has neither the age nor the experience to make such a part convincing. Harry Mestayer, as the brother with the skull that needed trepanning, was strangely enough, the comedian. His slang drew laughs from the gallery, and he was quite a cutup.

The two best characterizations were those of the besotted couple, "pa and ma," played by James A. Marcus and Miss Jessie Ralph.

It will be a strange thing if "The Escape" endures.

Dangers Faced By Screen Actors to Create Pictures; Film Flicks

THAT death and danger fill the lives of the photoplay actors and camera men is shown by the thrilling stories of peril and escapes told in connection with obtaining realistic scenes for motion pictures.

Acting With Wild Beasts.

Making a photoplay of "Quo Vadis" was fraught with peril for the motion picture actors and actresses. When a scene in which 50 wild beasts play an important part was about to be staged near Rome, Italy, all of the big menageries dealers in Europe were asked to obtain wild animals of the right type. Lions, tigers, wolves and panthers were secured to make the scene more lifelike.

The secret of the arrival of the animals had been kept from the members of the motion picture company, but when it was revealed they refused point blank to act with a horde of savage beasts, unrestrained by bars. The directors of the company had planned to have the brutes in the arena with the crowd of men, women and children that took part in the production and they finally secured more actors by offering unusually high salaries and promising to take every precaution against accidents. The high wall about the arena was filled with loopholes at each of which stood an expert marks man with a loaded rifle, ready to kill any animal that started to attack.

Tiger Attacks Actress.

It became known that the fears of the actors were well founded when a large Bengal tiger made for a pretty actress in her teens. The force of his attack was stopped by a bullet, but he succeeded in severely mangling one of her arms. One of the keepers was attacked by a lion in the excitement that followed and he did not leave a hospital till six weeks afterward as a result. Another tiger attacked an actor later on, but the man's life was saved by a bullet from a rifle.

A dramatic termination occurred during the enactment of a scene in which train wreckers were supposed to tie a signalman to the metal. The engine was supposed to approach and to be stopped just in time to avert a tragedy. Unfortunately, this later proviso failed, for the man was run over and killed. The operator, who was stationed higher up the line, was unaware that anything was amiss and continued to turn the handle of the camera, thus recording every detail of the accident. The accident occurred before the photoplay men had gained the knowledge that the effect of showing a person about to be run over by cars could be obtained by running the train away from the actor tied on the tracks.

On more than one occasion daring actors have sacrificed their lives.

Miss Julia Swayne Gordon was bitten on the arm and the trainer, Paul, was severely injured by "Princess," the tiger used in the production of "The Tiger Lily."

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Selig has produced a peculiar drama called "The Flight of the Crow." It

(Continued on Next Page.)

WRITES THRILLERS FOR THE "MOVIES"

London, Eng., Sept. 27.—The countess of Warwick has entered the "movie" world as a writer of scenarios and has thrown open Warwick castle, with its

COUNTESS OF WARWICK

thousands of acres of deer park and woodland, as a setting for dramas.

Lady Warwick admits that she has written her first play in "a highly sensational vein." It is called "The Great Pearl Affair," and is therefore extremely topical.